



VIOLENCE AT THE TERRITORIAL LEVEL OF MUNICIPALITIES

- 21- Three of the ten most violent municipalities in the country are in Bolivar (El Callao, Sifontes and Roscio), four in Miranda (Paz Castillo, Brion, Sucre and Lander) and the remaining are located in Yaracuy (Bruzual), Zulia (La Cañada de Urdaneta) and Carabobo (Juan José Mora).
- 22- The three municipalities with the highest violence in 2023 were located in the mining area of Bolivar state, being the municipality of El Callao with a rate of 424.7 victims per one hundred thousand inhabitants, the most violent in the country. It is followed in violence by the municipality of Sifontes (Tumeremo), with a rate of 151 victims, and the municipality of Roscio (Guasipati), with 134.3 violent deaths per 100,000 inhabitants.
- 23- In the state of Miranda, the municipality with the highest rate of violence per one hundred thousand inhabitants was Paz Castillo (Santa Lucia del Tuy) with 75.7, followed by Brion (Higuerote) with a rate of 62.7 and then Sucre (Petare) with 61.1 and finally Lander (Ocumare del Tuy) with 60.5.
- 24- The following ten municipalities in the list (position 11 to 20) include two in the state of Carabobo: Diego Ibarra (Mariara) with 47.5 and Libertador (Tocuyito) with 47.1; two in the state of Sucre: Arismendi with 46.4 and Montes de Oca with 40.9; two municipalities in the state of Miranda: Acevedo (Caucagua) with 44 and Guaicaipuro (Los Teques) with 39.4. The other four remaining municipalities are located, one in the state of Zulia, the municipality of Jesús Enrique Lossada (55.5); one in Guárico state, the municipality of Zaraza (53.6); one in the Capital District, the municipality of Libertador (50.8); and one in Bolívar state, the Bolivarian municipality of Angostura (45.5).
- 25- Out of the 335 municipalities in the country, 42 of them registered violent death rates higher than the country's average (26.8), while 83 municipalities had a stable rate higher than 10 per one hundred thousand inhabitants, being at the level considered an epidemic of violence.





HOMICIDES

- 26- The highest number of homicides per federal entity was registered in the states of Miranda with 279 victims, Capital District with 223 and Zulia with 205 deaths. They are followed in order of importance by Bolivar (150), Aragua (127), Carabobo (117), Sucre (111) and Guárico (82).
- 27- Expressed as rates per hundred thousand inhabitants, the first place is occupied by Delta Amacuro, which, although it only had 27 homicides, due to its population size has a rate of 16.1. It is followed by the five states with the highest rates, the Capital District with 13.4; the state of Sucre with 12.6; Guárico with 10.7 and Miranda with 10.5 victims per one hundred thousand inhabitants.



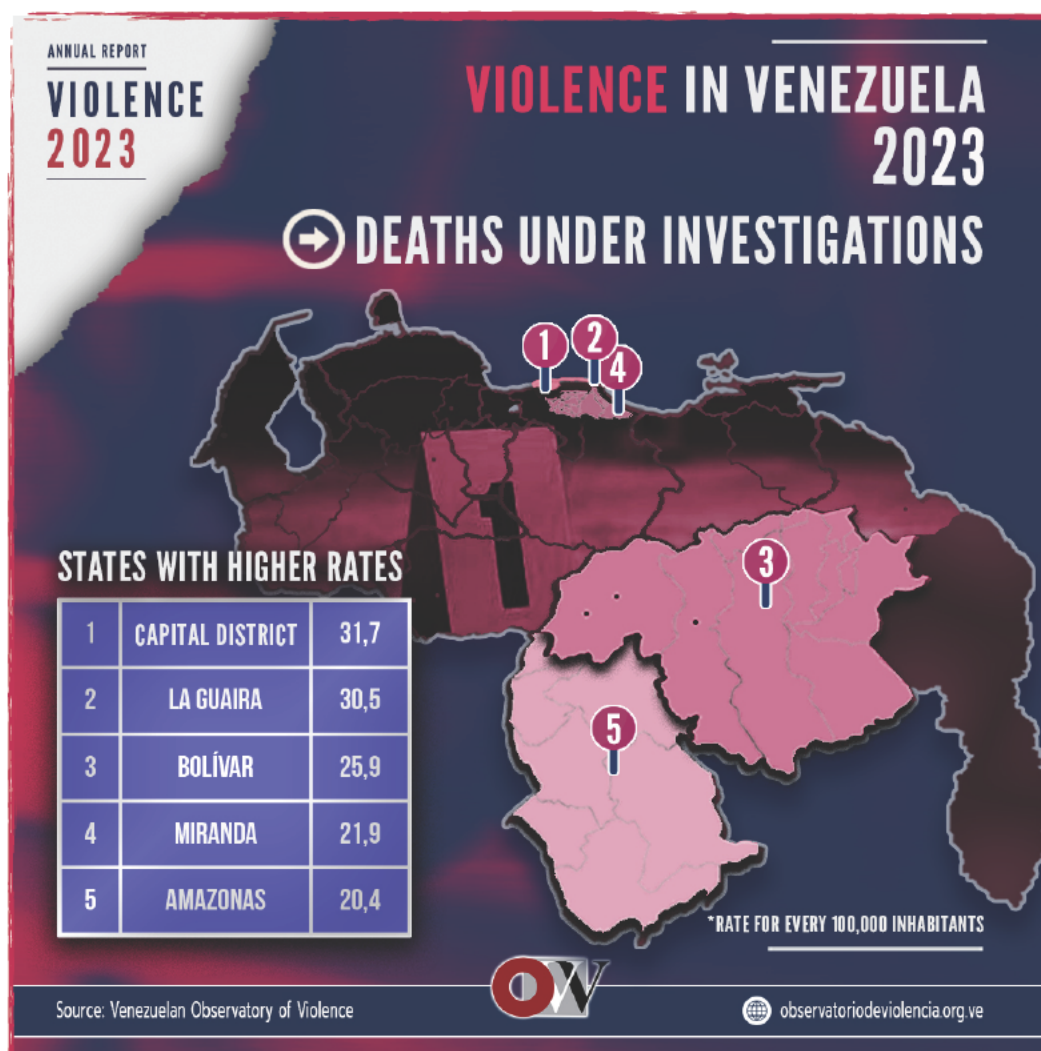
DEATHS DUE TO POLICE INTERVENTION

- 28- The states with the highest number of deaths resulting from police interventions were Miranda with 227 victims, Carabobo with 131, Zulia with 115, Aragua with 100, the Capital District with 96, and the states of Bolívar and Anzoátegui with 41 deaths each and Guárico with 32.
- 29- Observing deaths by police intervention as rates and according to the respective population base, we find that the first five states with the highest rates were Miranda (8.6); Aragua (6.6); Carabobo (6.4); Distrito Capital (5.8) and Amazonas which, although it registered eight cases, its rate was 4.9 victims per one hundred thousand inhabitants.
- 30- In the state of Carabobo, deaths due to police intervention exceeded victims of crime, and in the states of Miranda and Aragua, the magnitudes of both categories were similar.



DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

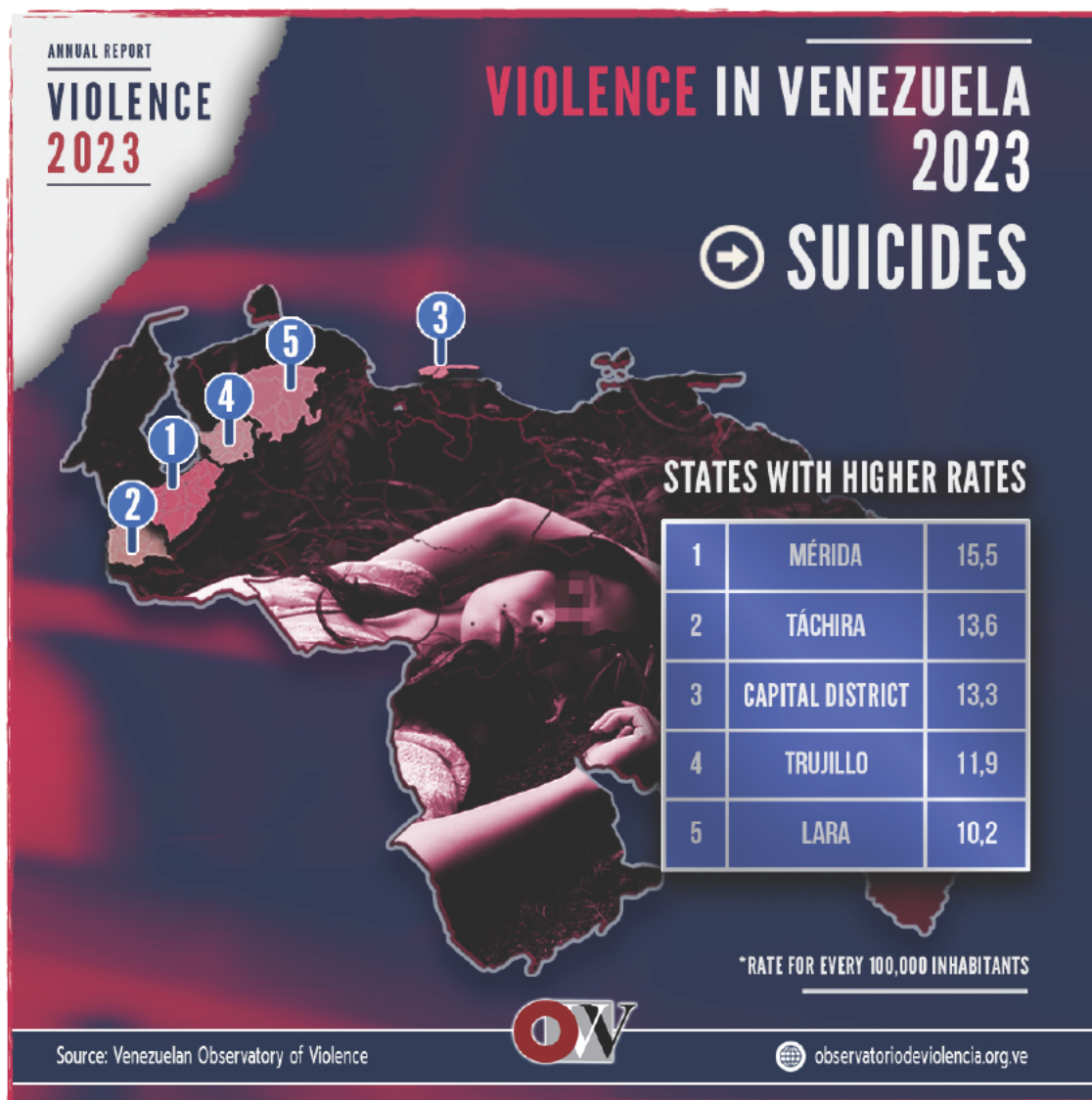
- 31- The federal entities with the highest number of unsolved cases of violent deaths classified under the category of death investigations were: Miranda (580); Capital District (528); Zulia (460); Bolívar (391); Carabobo (270); Lara (216); Anzoátegui (196) and Aragua (182).
- 32- If we observe them as rates, the five federal entities with the highest number of cases of death investigations in relation to the size of their population were the Capital District with 31.7; La Guaira, which with 93 cases has a rate of 30.5; Bolivar with 25.9; Miranda with 21.9 and Amazonas, which with 33 cases has a rate of 20.4 victims per 100,000 inhabitants.



SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE

- 33- According to the various official data available, the rate of self-inflicted deaths is 8.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, a value that tended to increase by 6.5% when compared to our estimate for 2022 (7.7 suicide deaths per 100,000 inhabitants). In the context of federal entities, 17 experienced increases in their rates between 2022-2023 (Amazonas, Barinas, Bolivar, Carabobo, Cojedes, Delta Amacuro, Falcón, Guárico, Lara, Mérida, Monagas, Nueva Esparta, Portuguesa, Sucre, Táchira, Trujillo and Zulia) compared to 2021-2022 where only 11 increased their values. In the remaining seven entities, the rate was reduced (Capital District, Anzoátegui, Apure, Aragua, Miranda, Yaracuy and La Guaira) and it is noteworthy that most of them belong to the central-north coastal region, while in the last two previous years (2021-2022) Capital District, Aragua and Miranda, increased their figures.
- 34- For the 22nd year in a row, the state of Merida has the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths in the country, with 15.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. The next five states with the highest rates are Táchira (13.6%), Capital District (13.3%, which dropped to third place after holding second place for two years), Trujillo (11.9%), and Lara (10.2%). Once again, the three Andean states are in the lead, which is a common occurrence based on retrospective studies on this cause of death.
- 35- Men continue to be the ones who make the most attempts on their lives (82.0% of cases). Meanwhile, hanging continues to be the method most frequently used by those who attempt suicide (75.1%), while depression tends to appear with the greatest relative weight (86.1%) as the motive or presumed immediate cause of suicide.





GENDER VIOLENCE

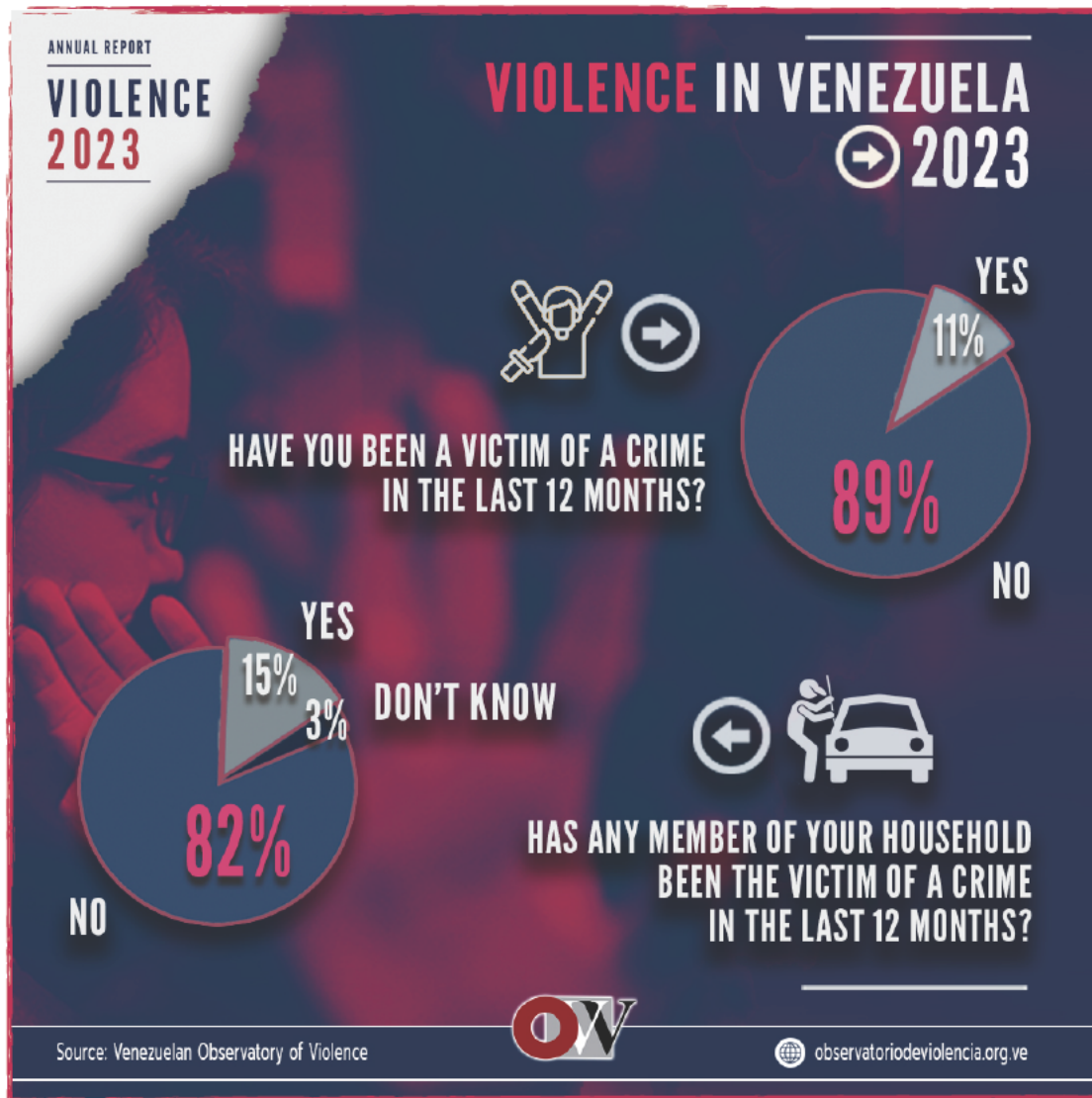
- 36- The masculinization of lethal violence in the country persists. Out of the victims of bodily injury, 61.4% were male; 88.4% of those murdered were male and 98.6% of the victims killed by police intervention were also male.
- 37- Concerning the information available on the motive for the murder, we found that in cases of criminal violence, 95% of the victims were men. However, about suspicious gender violence, the data is different, and the victims were 56% women.
- 38- Female victimization varied notably from a very low level, in the case of deaths due to police intervention, which were 1.4%, to a very high percentage in rapes, where they accounted for 96% of known victims. Among the non-fatal victims of violence, four (39%) out of every ten injured were women, and six (61%) were men.
- 39- In 2023, 12 cases of infanticide were identified in which the mother acted directly as the victimizer or was an accomplice to the death on the part of the father or stepfather. Various types of crimes were recorded and made known to society: cruel treatment, sexual abuse, rape, and negligence, in which there is cruelty and vicious treatment of defenseless children.
- 40- It was also possible to count 171 female adolescent victims of rape and other sexual aggressions and 153 boys and girls victims of these crimes. Eighty-nine percent of the victims of rape and sexual crimes are children under 12 years of age and adolescents, who are also the most frequent victims of sexual exploitation.
- 41- There were cases of children and adolescents murdered by criminals, in situations that could be associated with retaliation or "punishment" against their parents or relatives, as in the case of the 10-year-old boy who was shot several times because his father did not let them steal the motorcycle they were riding, or the 12-year-old teenager who was gunned down at the door of his house by a gang seeking revenge against his stepfather.
- 42- In July 2023, the Public Prosecutor's Office reported that a total of 2,076 cases had been filed for the crime of sexual abuse of children and adolescents from January to June 2023; and in recent months, prosecutorial proceedings and judicial sentences against adults responsible for crimes have been published.

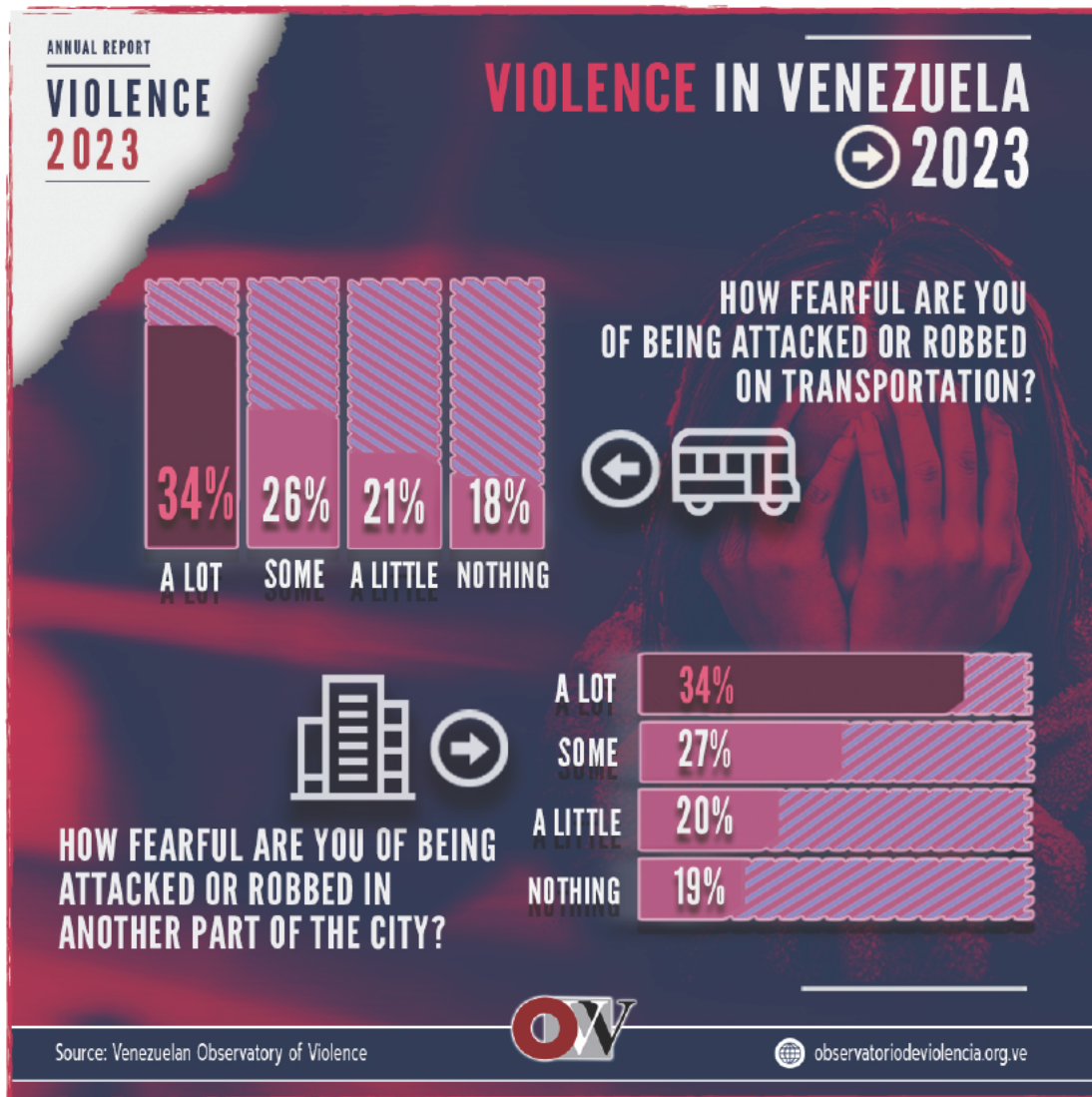


REPORTED VICTIMIZATION

- 43- In a study conducted in mid-2023 with a national household sample survey, with the purpose of finding out the victimization reported by families, it was found that 11% of those interviewed and 15% of some of the other members of that household had been direct victims of a crime during the twelve months before the survey.
- 44- When asked about their perception of changes in the violence situation, 43% of those surveyed said that the situation had remained the same, 22% said that it had decreased and 35% said that it had increased.
- 45- 60% of the population said they were afraid of being victims of violence in public transportation, and 34% of them said they were very afraid. While 18% said they were not afraid at all. Similar proportions are repeated when it comes to the fear of being a victim of crime in a part of the city different from where they live, since in that case 61% said they were worried, while 19% said they were not afraid at all.
- 46- Almost half of the population (47%) stated that due to fear of being a victim of violent crime, they had restricted their attendance to recreational places or at the times they were accustomed to or would like to have attended.
- 47- A little more than one-fifth of the population (22%) stated that due to fear of violence, they had felt the need to move from the area or city in which they lived.
- 48- Despite the victimization rates staying consistent between 2022 and 2023, it is noteworthy that there was a noticeable shift in the population's perception of security, which holds significant social value.



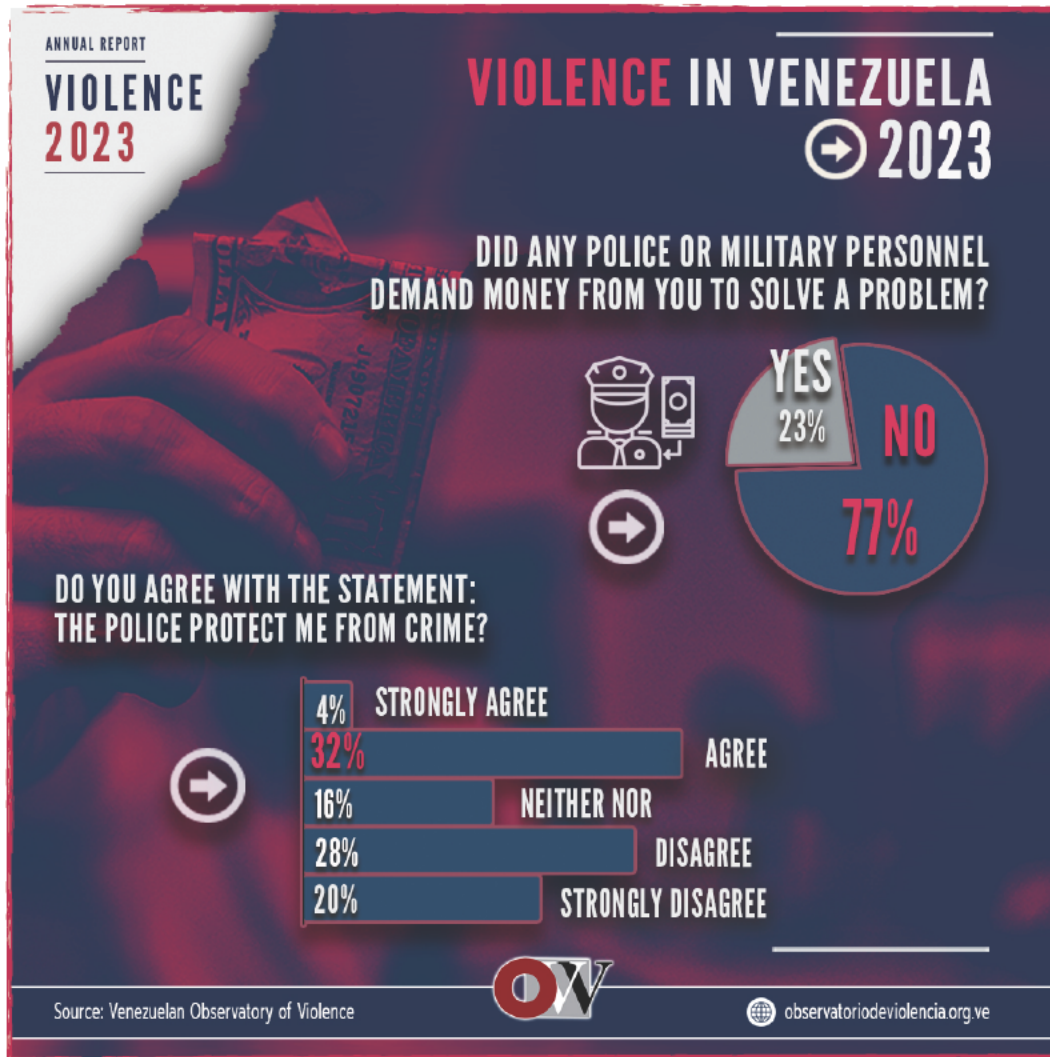






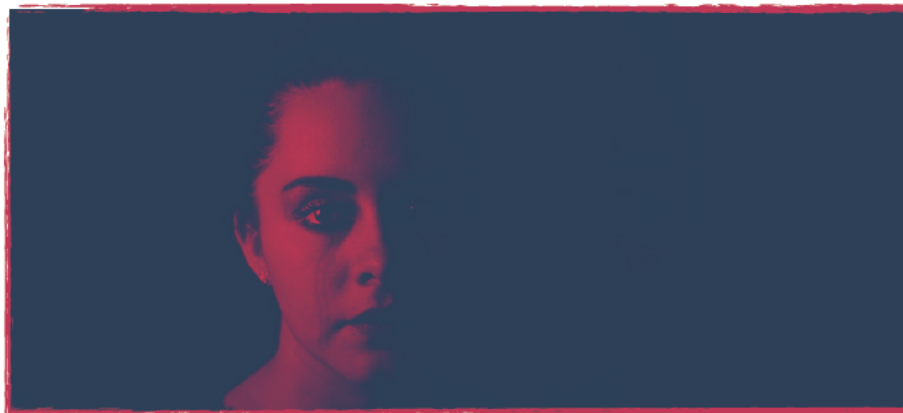
POLICE PROTECTION

- 49- There is a prevalent lack of clarity among citizens in the country regarding the effectiveness of police protection in the face of crime. A mere 4% of respondents strongly agreed that the police provided them with adequate protection, while 20% (five times as many) strongly disagreed, citing the feeling of being left unprotected. Overall, 36% of respondents believed that the police provided them with protection, while 48% believed that they were not protected by the police.
- 50- However, when asked about their willingness to cooperate with the police and the risk that this could represent, more than two-quarters (59%) of the population considered it very dangerous to cooperate with the security forces. Only a little more than a fifth (22%) considered that it was not at all dangerous to help the police in their work.
- 51- Deaths due to police intervention are evaluated in different ways by the population, because while some consider the results positive, there is a rejection of the means used and the possible violations of human rights and due process. This perception varies depending on how close or far away the events occur.
- 52- It is significant that in some municipalities there were more deaths due to police action than homicides committed by criminals, in the municipality of Juan José Mora of the state of Carabobo; municipalities of Lander and Libertador of the state of Miranda; municipalities Linares Alcántara of Aragua and Zamora of Guárico.
- 53- During the year, an effort was made by the police to offer protection to highly vulnerable agricultural companies and producers in their production and commercialization tasks. In the opinion of business actors, this protection work has been unevenly distributed and has not had the universal character required by its public function, considering that it is a process of informal "privatization" of police actions.
- 54- In a study with a national sample of households, it was found that in 23% of those interviewed, a quarter of the population stated that in the previous 12 months, they had had to pay police or military officials because they had been asked for money to resolve some situation or problem. Extortion by officials who demand payment or request "collaboration" under asymmetrical conditions of power has become generalized in public administration offices, but constitutes a greater aberration with those officials who are in charge of law enforcement and protection of citizens. The public sentiment is that they are being subjected to a dual form of coercion - one from the criminal elements and the other from the law enforcement agencies. This is causing significant damage to the institutional framework of the country..



PROTECTION OF OTHER SOCIAL ACTORS

- 55- The reduced trust in the police leaves room for other social actors, legal and illegal, to take over the protection role that is the State's obligation.
- 56- Neighbors are the main actors in which the population places its trust for protection against crime: 63% of Venezuelans considered their neighbors to be their family's primary protection against crime.
- 57- Although in a much lower percentage, but no less significant, 7% of those surveyed considered that the so-called "collectives" protected them from crime. This is an important figure, considering that these social actors are present in small geographical areas of the country.
- 58- It is also significant that 3.2% of the population considers that it is the criminal gang operating in the area where they live that offers them protection, showing progress in establishing criminal governance in several areas of the country.
- 59- The establishment of various modalities of criminal governance in several territories of the nation shows the expansion of the business model that illegal actors have assumed to control various types of income from the construction of factitious monopolies of production or distribution of legal goods with the use of force. This business model, based on extortion and direct or associated participation in business, has led to the repression of petty crime and juvenile violence by organized criminal groups and provoked a sense of security among the population and a reduction in the rates of lethal violence.





THE MORALITY OF SOCIETY

- 60- In 2023, there was a significant decline in the quality of life for the general population. This was due to a number of factors, including stagnant wages in the public sector, modest increases in the private sector, the use of the dollar for transactions, and sustained inflation in the prices of essential goods and services such as food, transportation, and public utilities. As a result, many people had to seek out additional sources of income, such as taking on a second job or starting a small business. Some even had to sell assets to cover the costs of necessary expenses, such as school supplies for their children or medical treatment.
- 61- In the midst of these adverse conditions, it is susceptible to imagine that the temptation of crime as a means to overcome poverty could be generalized in society. To this end, we asked a sample of the national population what their opinion was on whether a young person in their community would agree to join a criminal group in order to get out of poverty. The response options had two dimensions: one of moral evaluation (would or would not approve of it) and the other of situational understanding (would or would not justify it).
- 62- The results were that 88% of those interviewed expressed a profound moral rejection of such behavior and stated that they would neither approve nor justify it.
- 63- In the remaining 12%, a quarter, 3% expressed that they approved and justified it. The remaining 9% expressed a moral rejection of the decision and said they approve would disapprove of it but that they would find it understandable and justify it because of the present and future conditions expressed in the question.
- 64- The notable rejection of the situation by 88% of the population shows that this is the dominant and generalized moral value regardless of social strata or political, ideological, or religious preferences. However, it is important to note a worrying difference found in the age groups, since the group that approved or justified the action was made up more of young people, while among the older population, rejection predominated.





INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

- 65- In 2023, Latin America witnessed two contrasting scenarios related to violence and criminal activities. Ecuador, which was once considered a relatively safe country in the region, experienced a significant surge in crime and lethality, making it perhaps the most dangerous country in the region. In contrast, El Salvador witnessed a steady decline in the number of homicides during the same period.
- 66- In the year 2023, many countries saw a decrease in the number of homicides. However, it is essential to note that this positive trend did not completely compensate for the previous rise in violent deaths in some countries, nor did it bring the rates back to their historical levels.
- 67- Ecuador has experienced fluctuations in its homicide rate over the last century, with periods of eight to ten years of ups and downs. The homicide rate had remained stable between 8 and 10, but in the first decade of the 21st century, it peaked in 2008 with 18 victims per 100,000 inhabitants. Between 2009 and 2018, there was a considerable decrease in the rate of violence, with an official calculation of 6 deaths per hundred inhabitants. However, there has been a sustained increase in violence since then, and it is projected that the rate could reach 44 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants by 2023, potentially making it the highest in the region. This sudden change can be explained by the presence in the Pacific coast provinces (Guayas, Manabí, Esmeralda, El Oro, Entre Ríos) of local criminal gangs that, in alliance with Colombian and Mexican criminal organizations, have built an important niche of criminal action, dedicated to drug exportation and money laundering with strong penetration in local politics. Ecuador is located between two cocaine-producing countries, Colombia and Peru, and its coastal areas have important ports that had been used for drug transit, but in recent years, these provinces have become a privileged logistical location for drug smuggling, along with the country's important agricultural exports. On the other hand, using the dollar as the country's legal tender since 1999 has made it easier for criminal groups to carry out illegal transactions and launder money from other countries. The assassinations of the mayor of Manta or of a presidential candidate in the middle of the electoral campaign, and the subsequent elimination of the material executors of the crime, are an important indicator of the presence of organized crime in the country and its risks for democratic governance.
- 68- In 2015, El Salvador had a homicide rate of 106 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. With a history of social and political violence for more than a century, it was after the end of the internal war between the guerrillas and the national army between 1979 and 1992 that the shift from political violence to common criminality took place, driven by the demobilization of combatants from both sides. The unemployed combatants began to use the violence they had learned for other purposes. They contributed to the emergence of the two criminal gangs, the "maras", which imposed their dominance over large territories and whose confrontations for markets, rents, and spaces turned the country into the most violent in the world. After various security policies that alternated between an iron fist and truces, the most recent policy implemented by the government of mass incarceration of young gang members, allowed the fracturing of gangs and the drastic reduction of homicides, whose rate dropped according to the government to 18 in the year 2021, to 7.8 in 2002 and that official sources estimate to end 2023 with 2.3 deaths per one hundred thousand inhabitants. The methods used and the results obtained are a source of controversy, admiration and rejection, both nationally and internationally. Some analysts and politicians criticize the security policy employed by the government of El Salvador for the human rights and due process violations that may have occurred; others doubt the veracity of the death figures and rates offered by the authorities, since, they argue, these data do not include deaths occurring in police action, nor the disappearances carried out by both

criminal gangs and the police forces themselves. What is widely recognized is the drastic change in the situation of violence and criminality in the country.

- 69- Honduras has been another country that has had very high homicide rates during the last decade and has shown a sustained reduction recently. Officials claim that the application since the end of 2022 of a "State of Emergency" and a "crime solution" plan has allowed a reduction in violent deaths and the homicide rate, which could close 2023 with a figure that some estimate could be around 30, while others believe it could reach 37 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. Civil society organizations maintain that there is an important change in criminality due to greater control of gangs and confrontations that end in multiple murders, and a focus of activities not only in the traditional areas, such as the city of San Pedro Sula, but also an expansion and consolidation in the coast and jungle of the Mosquitia as a platform for drug trafficking from South America to the United States.
- 70- In Colombia and Brazil, there has been a sustained and significant reduction in violence in recent years, and by 2023, a modest decrease of about 2% in the homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants is expected, which in preliminary calculations is estimated to be around 23 deaths in Colombia and 21 deaths in Brazil. Both countries have also seen changes in the territorial location of violence, with a reduction in traditionally violent cities and an increase in the departments of the Atlantic coast in Colombia. In Brazil, violence that had shifted from the southern states (Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais) to the north (Amazonas, Amapá) and northeast (Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Bahia), has once again spiked in the southeast of the country.
- 71- In Mexico, it can be estimated from police sources and data provided by The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, for its initials in Spanish) that after a reduction in murders in 2021 and 2022, the homicide rate will remain stable at around 24 deaths per hundred inhabitants in 2023. Territorial differences in violence are very important in Mexico, and affect the national rate, as violent deaths are lower in the Yucatan peninsula (Campeche, Yucatan) and very high in the northern region bordering the United States (Sonora, Baja California), and in the central part of the country (Colima, Zacatecas, Michoacan, Guanajuato). Violence in Mexico continues to be determined by the rivalries between criminal organizations for the control of illegal rents, whether linked to the trafficking of drugs such as cocaine or fentanyl or for the control of other goods, such as the production and export of avocados. An essential change in the criminal world, which is the cause of new conflicts, occurs due to changes in the type of drugs trafficked to the United States, as there is a contraction in the export of marijuana and cocaine and a significant increase in shipments of fentanyl and methamphetamines. These changes in the drug market have an impact on the dominance of markets and routes held by criminal organizations, which may have an impact on both the increase and decrease in homicides.
- 72- In other Central American countries such as Guatemala and Panama, it is possible to calculate slight decreases in homicide rates, resulting in a rate of 16.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants in Guatemala and 10.8 in Panama at the end of the year. In Nicaragua, it is not possible to calculate the situation of violence due to the censorship applied to information on crime in recent years.
- 73- Chile has been one of the countries with the lowest violent deaths in Latin America. The existing criminality was concentrated in robberies, thefts, and other crimes against property, but committed with a very low lethality, so the country presented enviable rates of around 3 homicides per hundred thousand inhabitants. That rate had slightly increased as of 2018, and in the "First national report of consummated homicides" presented by the government in mid-2023, a rate of 6.7 for the year 2022 was reported. The increase in crime and especially in

violent deaths became a matter of political concern, and the presence of the gang of Venezuelan origin known as the Aragua Train had particular relevance, due to the continuous highlighting in the press of their use of violence and the lethality they provoked. By the year 2023, a reduction is estimated that could place the rate at around 5 deaths per hundred thousand inhabitants.



CONCLUSIONS

- 74- In 2023, a discernible reduction in the overall levels of violence could be observed in Venezuela. This decrease in violence can be attributed to the reduction of disorganized criminal activities and the growing concentration and monopolization of violence by powerful criminal organizations. These criminal organizations are now focusing on specific niches of criminal opportunities, which has led to a decreased overall level of violence in the country.
- 75- The decrease in "disorganized" violence, which causes high lethality, has been reduced by the notable emigration of young people and the loss of opportunities for crime.
- 76- In recent years, there has been a reduction in the lethality of violence in certain parts of the country. This trend has been attributed to agreements made between criminal gangs regarding the distribution of tasks during business operations, as well as the demarcation of areas of operation, which has allowed for their expansion and consolidation. However, in municipalities where there are no such agreements or where criminal control has not been fully established, violent events continue to occur.
- 77- In spite of the significant outflow of millions of young people from the country in recent years, a segment of the youth population still remains outside the formal education system and lacks access to employment opportunities. This cohort is at a heightened risk of engaging in criminal activities, which could potentially lead to the emergence of new local gangs and the involvement of youth in organized criminal networks. Such a situation could have grave consequences as this group of young people may end up replacing the emigrated youth as the next generation of criminals.
- 78- The data shows a decrease in fatalities resulting from police encounters. However, the numbers are still alarmingly high. Furthermore, there is a lack of information regarding the methods utilized by law enforcement officials to distinguish between the lawful and unlawful use of force.
- 79- Although we observe a reduction in the number of violent deaths in the country, the estimated rate for Venezuela, at the national level, is higher than that of countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, being only surpassed by Ecuador and Honduras, which lead the figures of violence in the region. Despite a decrease in the overall number of violent fatalities in Venezuela, the national rate of violent deaths remains notably high, surpassing that of countries such as Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. Only Ecuador and Honduras exhibit higher levels of violence within the region.
- 80- The absence of information caused by censorship and the lack of transparency in cases classified as death investigations, which make up the majority of violent deaths, combined with the high number of deaths resulting from police intervention, creates uncertainty about the true level of violence and crime in the country. This uncertainty prevents a proper interpretation of the situation and impedes the development of effective public policies.
- 81- Although there is no public information that allows monitoring indicators of the effectiveness of the management of the Public Ministry about the crime of sexual abuse of children and adolescents, we recognize the value of police action and the administration of justice in the prosecution and legal punishment of crimes of sexual abuse, cruel treatment, negligence, among others. However, there are no known institutional measures for the safeguarding and comprehensive protection of victims, nor about the increase of public prevention programs and

services, for the timely attention to the vulnerable population and not only act when the damage, aggression, and death have already occurred.

- 82- Gender violence remains invisible due to the lack of official information in which public agencies document cases, which would allow the identification of risk factors and the necessary protection services and resources. On the other hand, a real difficulty is the lack of specialized training for the proper registration of cases of femicides, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and injuries, since as long as criteria and indicators with disaggregated data are not established, with a gender approach and from a human rights perspective, it will only be possible to count on scattered, inaccurate and unreliable data to know the nature of violence against women in Venezuelan society.

- 83- The victimization of women has considerable consequences and impacts on society. The deaths of women due to femicides imply orphanhood, exclusion, and abandonment of the children in their care; women survivors of personal injuries, rapes, and threats assume the challenge of facing the damages, injuries, and threats without support programs, with their resources and without services or opportunities for protection and development. In the context of deprivation, poverty, and structural violence typical of the complex humanitarian emergency that the country is experiencing, most of the women who have suffered violence continue to assume their responsibilities as mothers, heads of households, and responsible for the care and protection of their families.

- 84- The rate of self-inflicted violence in Venezuela fluctuates with the ups and downs of the humanitarian crisis and its impact on people, as well as the various risk factors associated with such behavior. It is important to note that without significant changes to the country's economic and political institutions, and improvements in living conditions, mental health and emotional stability for the majority of the population will be difficult to achieve. Furthermore, unless public policies on the prevention and control of self-inflicted violence are implemented, this behavior will continue to be a public health issue and a cause for concern.

- 85- The decrease in occurrences and prevalence of fatalities caused by violence is crucial and beneficial for the welfare and fundamental freedom of the public. Nevertheless, the rate of 26.8 casualties per one hundred thousand individuals persists to be alarmingly high and continues to rank among the highest in both the continent and the world.



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VENEZUELA >

Venezuela calls on retired teachers to return to school amid staff shortages

Emigration and low salaries for education workers have resulted in the loss of over 100,000 teaching professionals in recent years



A school in Caracas, Venezuela.
RAYNER PENA R (EFE)

ALONSO MOLEIRO

Caracas - OCT 10, 2024 - 13:18 EDT



Venezuela’s Education Minister Héctor Rodríguez has signed a resolution inviting retired teachers and professors to return to the classroom, just over a week before the start of the school year. This initiative aims to address a significant number of vacancies, particularly in the public sector, caused by the collapse of the salary structure and the [mass emigration of educators](#).

Rodríguez also announced that teachers currently on “service commissions” — working in administrative roles rather than teaching — must return to their teaching positions. In making this announcement, he acknowledged the challenges in filling subjects such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry within

national public education and emphasized the urgent need to ensure that students have full-time teachers in place.

“The primary task we face is to ensure quality, inclusive education for all. However, the biggest challenge in achieving this goal lies within our own bureaucracy and the functioning of the Ministry,” said Rodríguez.

The hyperinflationary crisis and [severe economic contraction](#) experienced by the country from 2014 to 2020 triggered a mass exodus of teachers at the end of the previous decade, leading to a significant deterioration of the Venezuelan educational system — once a cornerstone of Chavista propaganda regarding social investment and the achievements of its administration. The Venezuelan Federation of Teachers, an educational union, estimates that approximately 100,000 teachers left the profession between 2015 and 2020.

The Maduro government has spent several years [denying this reality](#), asserting that “not a single school has closed in Venezuela” despite the ongoing crisis. Currently, the government blames the situation on international sanctions, claiming these measures restrict their ability to manage budgets effectively. A public school teacher in Venezuela now earns approximately \$25 a month, a stark decline from over \$400 in 2010, when they were already underpaid. While teachers receive some additional bonuses deposited into their digital wallets — amounting to around \$150 — they often seek supplemental income by offering private lessons.

Many teachers have turned to alternative trades, becoming motorcycle taxi drivers or accepting loans from public banks — after nearly seven years of limited access to financing — to start micro-enterprises. While the public education sector serves the majority of Venezuela’s lower-income populations, private education caters primarily to the middle and upper classes, representing about 30% of the population. Although private institutions face challenges in retaining teachers who wish to emigrate and have also scaled back their services, they generally offer significantly better working conditions.

As the school year begins, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced a plan aimed at providing socio-economic aid and improvements for impoverished Venezuelan teachers, who are among the poorest in South

America. This initiative includes a digital credit-based purchasing program for acquiring goods, a new healthcare plan, coverage for urban transportation, and a monthly subsidy that includes food bags. Additionally, the country's network of public schools, which have deteriorated significantly in recent years, will undergo a comprehensive maintenance plan, for which Maduro has requested logistical assistance from the Armed Forces.

The Venezuelan teachers' union, one of the largest in the country, has long expressed frustration over the executive's salary arrears and has become a focal point of social unrest, evidenced by street protests over the past two years. Many of these demonstrations have faced harsh repression from the government, with organizers facing prosecution. Since the era of Hugo Chávez, the Bolivarian Revolution has invested heavily in health and education, yielding some encouraging results in its early years. However, these efforts eventually gave way to catastrophic administrative mismanagement and significant failures.

Chavista educational projects initially enjoyed success, particularly with the establishment of Bolivarian Schools and initiatives aimed at combating poverty, such as the School Feeding Program. Notable progress was made in preschool education, and alternative pathways to higher education were expanded through the Sucre Mission.

However, these achievements began to unravel amidst the national socioeconomic collapse that took hold during the [currency crisis of 2013](#), which led to the disappearance of goods and skyrocketing prices. Structural corruption undermined nearly all social programs, and the rapid devaluation of the currency severely eroded teachers' salaries and the funding available for maintenance.

Following significant advancements in education from the 1940s to the 1980s — during which illiteracy was nearly eradicated and access to primary education became widespread — Venezuela's educational system, particularly in the public sector, has entered a decline from which it has yet to recover.

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MIGUEL JIMÉNEZ / JUAN DIEGO QUESADA | WASHINGTON / BOGOTÁ

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17:03 Zelenskiy's adviser Mykhailo Podolyak: 'I think Trump will succeed where previous US administrations failed with Russia'

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WORLD NEWS

Major power outage hits Venezuela’s capital, with Maduro government blaming ‘sabotage’



1 of 13 | A man lights a candle in his shop during a blackout in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, At [Read More](#)

Updated 6:15 PM PST, August 30, 2024

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelans spent most of Friday in the dark as a major outage knocked out power in the capital, Caracas, and several states.

President Nicolás Maduro’s government blamed the outage, which it said began about 4:50 a.m., on “electrical sabotage.”

Major power outage hits Venezuela's capital, with Maduro government blaming sabotage | AP News

"Nobody will take away our peace and tranquility of the Venezuelan people," Freddy Nanez, the communications minister, wrote in a message shared with journalists on Telegram.

Nanez said in a voice message on Telegram that all 24 of Venezuela's states had been at least partially impacted. He characterized the outage as a "desperate" attempt by Maduro's opponents to violently oust the president.

"The entire national government has been activated to overcome this new aggression," he said.

Venezuelans awoke Friday to a major power outage in the capital, Caracas, and several states. President Nicolas Maduro's government blamed the outage, which began about 4:50 a.m., on "electrical sabotage." (AP Video/Juan Arraez)

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Venezuela's opposition supporters grapple with hope and disappointment after Maduro is sworn in



Venezuela's Maduro takes new oath amid protests and international rebuke

By nightfall, power had been restored in many parts of the capital after a day of sporadic outages. Maduro, in a Friday evening appearance on state TV, thanked Venezuelans for their patience after a chaotic day that saw businesses shutter, hospitals rely on backup generators and the closure of Caracas' subway leave tens of thousands of people stranded.

Venezuela in 2019, during a period of political unrest, suffered from [regular power outages](#) that the government almost always blamed on its opponents, but that energy experts said were the result of brush fires damaging transmission lines and poor maintenance of the country's hydroelectric infrastructure.

Many of the energy problems have subsided as the South American nation's economy has stabilized, high inflation has eased and a de facto dollarization has reduced shortages of imported goods.

Still, following [last month's contested presidential election](#), officials are quick to blame opponents for even minor disruptions. That was the case on Tuesday, when a brownout affected Caracas and several central states.

"This is a constant strategy of the opposition, the enemies of this country, to impact the population," Diosdado Cabello, the newly appointed interior minister who is believed to be the second most powerful man in the country, said after the earlier outage.

A bakery worker adjusts the shop during a blackout in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Aug. 30

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Residents of the capital were taking Friday's disruption in stride. Traffic during the normally busy rush hour was lighter than usual and some people complained about being unable to communicate with family members due to a lack of cellphone service.

Alejandra Martinez, a 25-year-old salesclerk, said she noticed the power went out when a fan stopped working. "I thought the power would come back and I went back to sleep," she said while trying to catch a bus to work as dawn broke over Caracas. "But when I woke up, I realized it was an outage."

Commuters walk during a blackout in Caracas, Venezuela, early Friday, Aug. 30

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Venezuela's power grid relies heavily on the Guri Dam, a giant hydroelectric power station that was inaugurated in the late 1960s. The electrical system has been burdened by poor upkeep, a lack of alternative energy supplies and a drain of engineering talent as an estimated 8 million Venezuelan migrants have fled economic misery in recent years,

WORLD NEWS

Tren de Aragua gang started in Venezuela's prisons and now spreads fear in the US



FILE - Soldiers raid the Tocarón Penitentiary Center, in Tocarón, Venezuela, Sept. 20, 2023. The Tren de Aragua gang originated at the

[Read More](#)



BY **JOSHUA GOODMAN**

Updated 8:54 PM EST, September 24, 2024

MIAMI (AP) — Former federal agent Wes Tabor says his phone has been lighting up with calls from police departments around the U.S. for advice on how to combat the growing threat from the Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua.

Tabor was in charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's office in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas in 2012 when the gang was still new and when Tabor had barely heard of it.

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Western Hemisphere tied to a mass exodus of Venezuelan migrants.

“What sets this group apart is the level of violence,” said Tabor, now retired from the DEA. “They’re aggressive, they’re hungry and they don’t know any boundaries because they’ve been allowed to spread their wings without any confrontation from law enforcement until now.”

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That's starting to change.

Tren de Aragua gang started in Venezuela's prisons and now spreads fear in the US. AP News. In July, the Biden administration [sanctioned the gang](#), placing it alongside [MS-13 from El Salvador](#) and the Mafia-styled Camorra from Italy on a list of transnational criminal organizations and offering \$12 million in rewards for the arrest of three leaders. Then, this month, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott declared Tren de Aragua a Tier 1 threat, directing state police to target the gang and paving the way for stiffer penalties for members. Other states may soon follow suit.

Gang gains notoriety in the US

Focus on the gang jumped after footage from a security camera surfaced on social media showing a group of heavily armed men brazenly entering an apartment in the Denver suburb of Aurora, Colorado.

That prompted former President Donald Trump to vow to “[liberate Aurora](#)” from Venezuelans he falsely said were “taking over the whole town.”

Police [have called the reports exaggerated](#) but nonetheless acknowledged that it is investigating 10 gang members for involvement in several crimes, including a July homicide.

Among them is a Venezuelan who was arrested in another Denver suburb and accused of helping someone else steal a motorcycle and pointing an AR-15 at a tow truck driver who had asked him to move his car. Another was suspected of stealing designer Gucci sunglasses in Boulder and has a multi-state criminal record, including for carjacking and vehicular assault.

Elsewhere, from the heartland to major cities like New York and Chicago, the gang has been blamed for sex trafficking, drug smuggling and police shootings as well as the exploitation of migrants.

The size of the gang and the extent to which its actions are coordinated across state lines and with leaders believed to be outside the U.S. are unclear.

The Tren originated in an infamous prison

The Tren, which means “train” in Spanish, traces its origin more than a decade ago to an infamously lawless prison with hardened criminals in the central state of Aragua. It nonetheless has expanded in recent years as more than 8 million desperate Venezuelans fled economic turmoil under [President Nicolás Maduro's rule](#) and migrated to other parts of Latin America or the U.S.

One of the founders is Hector Guerrero, who was jailed years ago for killing a police officer, according to InSight Crime, a think tank that monitors organized crime in the Americas. Guerrero, better known by his alias El Nino, Spanish for the “boy,” later escaped and then was recaptured in 2013. He fled prison again more recently, as Venezuela's government tried to reassert control over its prison population, and is believed to be residing in Colombia.

Authorities in countries such as Chile, Peru and Colombia — all with large populations of Venezuelan migrants — have accused the group of being behind [a spree of violence in a region that has long had some of the highest murder rates](#) in the world. Some of its more sensationalist crimes, including the beheading and burying alive of victims, have spread panic in poor neighborhoods where the gang extorts local businesses and illegally charges residents for “protection.”

Republican lawmakers make an issue of the gang

Now there are concerns about its ruthless tactics reaching U.S. shores as members infiltrate the nearly 1 million Venezuelan migrants who have crossed into the U.S. in recent years.

Eleven Republicans led by Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, the vice chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, wrote in a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland last week calling for a coordinated strategy from the Biden administration to combat the gang.

“The administration's weak enforcement of immigration laws allows gangs, like Tren de Aragua, to control routes and exploit migrants,” the letter said.

Venezuelan officials express bafflement

Meanwhile, back in Venezuela, officials have watched the attention on Tren de Aragua in the U.S. and have expressed their bafflement.

A year ago, President Nicolas Maduro's government claimed it had dismantled the gang after retaking control of the prison where the group was born. In July, Foreign Minister Yván Gil declared that the Tren de Aragua is a "fiction created by the international media."

More recently, Diosdado Cabello, a longtime ruling party-leader, linked the criminal group to an alleged plot backed by the U.S. and the opposition to kill Maduro and some of his allies following the July 28 presidential election.

"The United States knows how to carry out destabilization operations," Cabello said Friday when he announced the arrest of several people, including a U.S. citizen, for their alleged roles in the foiled anti-Maduro plan. "Why don't they stop them?"

AP writers Colleen Slevin in Denver, Regina Garcia Cano in Caracas, Venezuela, and Astrid Suarez in Bogota, Colombia, contributed to this report.

This version has corrected the retired DEA agent's first name to Wes not Was.

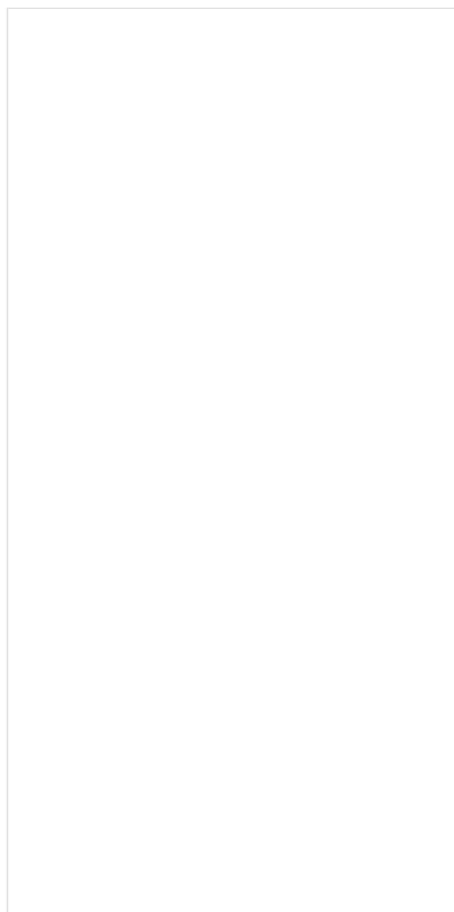


JOSHUA GOODMAN

Goodman is a Miami-based investigative reporter who writes about the intersection of crime, corruption, drug trafficking and politics in Latin America. He previously spent two decades reporting from South America.



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WORLD NEWS

US sanctions a Venezuela gang for spreading criminal activity across Latin America



BY JOSHUA GOODMAN

Updated 6:07 PM EST, July 11, 2024

MIAMI (AP) — The Biden administration on Thursday sanctioned a [Venezuelan gang allegedly behind a spree of kidnappings, extortion](#) and other violent crimes tied to migrants that have spread across Latin America and the United States.

The U.S. also offered a \$12 million reward for the arrest of three leaders of Tren de Aragua, which now joins the MS-13 gang from El Salvador and the Mafia-styled Camorra from Italy on a list of transnational criminal organizations banned from doing business in the U.S.

“Tren de Aragua poses a deadly criminal threat across the region,” the U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement, adding that it often preys on vulnerable populations such as migrant women and girls for sex trafficking.

“When victims seek to escape this exploitation, Tren de Aragua members often kill them and publicize their deaths as a threat to others,” the statement added.

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The Tren de Aragua traces its origins to more than a decade ago, to an infamously lawless prison in the central state of Aragua where a number of hardened criminals were held. But it has expanded in recent years as millions of desperate Venezuelans fled [President Nicolás Maduro's rule](#) and migrated to other parts of Latin America or the U.S.

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Trump administration in talks to send Venezuelan gang members to El Salvador prisons



Venezuela frees 6 Americans after meeting between President Maduro and Trump's envoy

Authorities in countries such as Colombia, Peru and Ecuador — with large populations of Venezuelan migrants — have accused the group of being behind [a spree of violent crimes in a region that has long had some of the highest murder rates](#) in the world.

Initially its focus was exploiting Venezuelan migrants through loan sharking, human trafficking and the smuggling of contraband goods to and from Venezuela.

But as the Venezuelan diaspora has settled more permanently abroad, it has joined — and sometimes clashed — with homegrown criminal syndicates engaged in drug trafficking, extortion of local businesses and murders for hire.

Among the groups the Treasury Department said the gang has teamed up with is Primeiro Comando da Capital, a notorious organized crime group out of Brazil that has also been sanctioned by the U.S.

Earlier this year, prosecutors in Chile blamed the gang, whose name means “train” in Spanish, for the [killing of a Venezuelan army official](#) who had sought refuge in that country after partaking in a failed plot to overthrow Maduro.

“The Tren de Aragua is not a vertically integrated criminal structure, but rather a federation of different gangs,” said Jeremy McDermott, the Colombia-based co-director of InSight Crime, which this month published a report on the gang’s expansion.

“It has now become a franchise name for Venezuelan criminal structures operating in the region, with weakening coherence now that its home prison base is no more,” McDermott said,

The group is led by Hector Guerrero, who was jailed years ago for killing a police officer, according to InSight Crime. Guerrero, better known by his alias El Nino, or Spanish for the “boy,” later escaped and then was recaptured in 2013, returning to the prison in Aragua where the criminal enterprise was then headquartered.

He fled prison again more recently, as Venezuelan authorities tried to reassert control over its prison population.

His current whereabouts are unknown but the U.S. State Department, which has offered up to \$12 million for his arrest and that of two other gang leaders, said it believes Guerrero and Giovanny San Vicente, another target of the U.S. bounty, are believed to be living in Colombia.

Sen. Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican who co-chairs the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, has warned that if left unchecked, the Tren de Aragua could also start terrorizing American cities.

Among the nearly 1 million Venezuelan migrants that have crossed into the U.S. in recent years are suspected gang members tied to police shootings, human trafficking and other crimes although there’s no evidence that the gang has set up an organizational structure in the U.S., McDermott said.

“Now we are seeing evidence that they have made it into the United States. Every single day, we’re seeing reports from Chicago, South Florida, and New York that these gang members are here,” Rubio said at a [Senate hearing in April](#).

The White House, in a [statement on Thursday said the Department of Homeland Security has implemented enhanced screening](#) to vet and better identify known or suspected gang members, including Tren de Aragua members.

Maduro's government has accused opponents of exaggerating the reach of Tren de Aragua to tarnish its reputation and said that authorities dismantled the group last year when security forces retook control of the prison that had served as its hub of illicit activity.

Hours after the U.S. sanctioned the gang, the government announced that a brother of the gang's leader, who was arrested in Barcelona earlier this year, arrived home pursuant to a Venezuelan extradition request to Spain.

Attorney General Tarek William Saab said that Gerso Guerrero, who was arrested earlier this year in Barcelona, faces up to 30 years in prison — the maximum in Venezuela — on multiple criminal charges including extortion, money laundering, weapons trafficking and terrorism.

Follow AP's coverage of Latin America and the Caribbean at <https://apnews.com/hub/latin-america>

JOSHUA GOODMAN

Goodman is a Miami-based investigative reporter who writes about the intersection of crime, corruption, drug trafficking and politics in Latin America. He previously spent two decades reporting from South America.



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Federal Register

Vol. 90, No. 18

Wednesday, January 29, 2025

Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 10886 of January 20, 2025

The President

Declaring a National Emergency at the Southern Border of the United States

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, I hereby proclaim:

America's sovereignty is under attack. Our southern border is overrun by cartels, criminal gangs, known terrorists, human traffickers, smugglers, unvetted military-age males from foreign adversaries, and illicit narcotics that harm Americans, including America.

This invasion has caused widespread chaos and suffering in our country over the last 4 years. It has led to the horrific and inexcusable murders of many innocent American citizens, including women and children, at the hands of illegal aliens. Foreign criminal gangs and cartels have begun seizing control of parts of cities, attacking our most vulnerable citizens, and terrorizing Americans beyond the control of local law enforcement. Cartels control vast territories just south of our southern border, effectively controlling who can and cannot travel to the United States from Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have tragically died from drug overdoses because of the illicit narcotics that have flowed across the southern border.

This assault on the American people and the integrity of America's sovereign borders represents a grave threat to our Nation.

Because of the gravity and emergency of this present danger and imminent threat, it is necessary for the Armed Forces to take all appropriate action to assist the Department of Homeland Security in obtaining full operational control of the southern border.

To protect the security and safety of United States citizens, to protect each of the States against invasion, and to uphold my duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, it is my responsibility as President to ensure that the illegal entry of aliens into the United States via the southern border be immediately and entirely stopped.

As Commander in Chief, I have no more solemn duty than to protect the American people.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 201 and 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*), hereby declare that a national emergency exists at the southern border of the United States, and that section 12302 of title 10, United States Code, is invoked and made available, according to its terms, to the Secretaries of the military departments concerned, subject to the direction of the Secretary of Defense. To provide additional authority to the Department of Defense to support the Federal Government's response to the emergency at the southern border, I hereby declare that this emergency requires use of the Armed Forces and, in accordance with section 301 of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1631), that the construction authority provided in section 2808 of

title 10, United States Code, is invoked and made available, according to its terms, to the Secretary of Defense and, at the discretion of the Secretary of Defense, to the Secretaries of the military departments. I hereby direct as follows:

Section 1. *Deployment of Personnel and Resources.* The Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of each relevant military department, as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, shall order as many units or members of the Armed Forces, including the Ready Reserve and the National Guard, as the Secretary of Defense determines to be appropriate to support the activities of the Secretary of Homeland Security in obtaining complete operational control of the southern border of the United States. The Secretary of Defense shall further take all appropriate action to facilitate the operational needs of the Secretary of Homeland Security along the southern border, including through the provision of appropriate detention space, transportation (including aircraft), and other logistics services in support of civilian-controlled law enforcement operations.

Sec. 2. *Additional Physical Barriers.* The Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security shall immediately take all appropriate action, consistent with law, including 10 U.S.C. 2214, to construct additional physical barriers along the southern border. To the extent possible, the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security shall coordinate with any Governor of a State that is willing to assist with the deployment of any physical infrastructure to improve operational security at the southern border.

Sec. 3. *Unmanned Aerial Systems.* The Secretary of Transportation and the Federal Communications Commission shall, consistent with applicable law, consider waiving all applicable Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Communications Commission regulations or policies, respectively, that restrict the Department of Homeland Security's ability to counter unmanned aerial systems within 5 miles of the southern border.

Sec. 4. *Revision of Policies and Strategies.* The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall take all appropriate action, consistent with law, to prioritize the impedance and denial of the unauthorized physical entry of aliens across the southern border of the United States, and to ensure that use of force policies prioritize the safety and security of Department of Homeland Security personnel and of members of the Armed Forces.

Sec. 5. *Revocation.* Proclamation 10142 of January 20, 2021 (Termination of Emergency With Respect to the Southern Border of the United States and Redirection of Funds Diverted to Border Wall Construction), is hereby revoked.

Sec. 6. *Reporting Requirement.* (a) Within 30 days of the date of this proclamation, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the President, through the Homeland Security Advisor, a report outlining all actions taken to fulfill the requirements and objectives of this proclamation; and

(b) Within 90 days of the date of this proclamation, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security shall submit a joint report to the President about the conditions at the southern border of the United States and any recommendations regarding additional actions that may be necessary to obtain complete operational control of the southern border, including whether to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807.

Sec. 7. *General Provisions.* (a) Nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

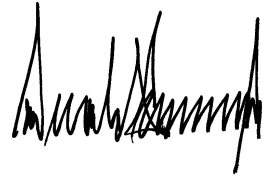
(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This proclamation shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This proclamation is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-ninth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Donald Trump", located on the right side of the page.

[FR Doc. 2025-01948
Filed 1-28-25; 8:45 am]
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Priorities and Mission of the Second Trump Administration's Department of State

PRESS STATEMENT

MARCO RUBIO, SECRETARY OF STATE

JANUARY 22, 2025

Serving as America's 72nd Secretary of State is the highest honor of my professional life. President Trump has given me a clear direction to place our core national interest as the guiding mission of American foreign policy. Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions:

Does it make America safer?

Does it make America stronger?

Does it make America more prosperous?

To advance our national interest, we will build a more innovative, nimble, and focused State Department. This will require replacing some priorities, deemphasizing some issues, and eliminating some practices.

First, we must curb mass migration and secure our borders. The State Department will no longer undertake any activities that facilitate or encourage mass migration. Our diplomatic relations with other countries, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, will prioritize securing

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America's borders, stopping illegal and destabilizing migration, and negotiating the repatriation of illegal immigrants.

Next, we must reward performance and merit, including within the State Department ranks. President Trump issued an executive order eliminating "DEIA" requirements, programs, and offices throughout the government. This order will be faithfully executed and observed in both letter and spirit.

Relatedly, we must return to the basics of diplomacy by eliminating our focus on political and cultural causes that are divisive at home and deeply unpopular abroad. This will allow us to conduct a pragmatic foreign policy in cooperation with other nations to advance our core national interests.

We must stop censorship and suppression of information. The State Department's efforts to combat malign propaganda have expanded and fundamentally changed since the Cold War era and we must reprioritize truth. The State Department I lead will support and defend Americans' rights to free speech, terminating any programs that in any way lead to censoring the American people. While we will combat genuine enemy propaganda, we will do so only with the fundamental truth that America is a great and just country whose people are generous and whose leaders now prioritize Americans' core interests while respecting the rights and interests of other nations.

Finally, we must leverage our strengths and do away with climate policies that weaken America. While we will not ignore threats to our natural environment and will support sensible environmental protections, the State Department will use diplomacy to help President Trump fulfill his promise for a return to American energy dominance.

In short, President Trump's forward-looking agenda for our country and foreign relations will guide the State Department's refocus on American national interests. Amid today's reemerging great power rivalry, I will empower our talented diplomatic corps to advance our mission to make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

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Priorities and Mission of the Second Trump Administration's Department of State

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

NATIONAL TPS ALLIANCE, *et. al.*,

Plaintiff,

v.

KRISTI NOEM, in her official capacity as
Secretary of Homeland Security, *et. al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 3:25-cv-1766

**CERTIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE
RECORD**

CERTIFICATION

I, Juliana Blackwell, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

1. I am employed with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”), as the acting Executive Secretary. I am responsible for the oversight and management of the Office of the Executive Secretary, which oversees the management of written communications intended for, and originated by, the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, and the maintenance of official Department records. I have held this position since August 2019.

2. I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the documents listed in the accompanying Index and contained in the PDF files annexed hereto constitute a true and accurate list of all nonprivileged documents and materials directly or indirectly considered by DHS and that these documents constitute the administrative record the agency considered in issuing the Federal Register Notice entitled “Termination of the October 3, 2023 Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status.”

1 I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

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3 Executed on: April 7, 2025

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7 Juliana Blackwell

8 Executive Secretary (acting)
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